



A Glossary of Literary Gothic Terms

Ancestral Curse Evil, misfortune, or harm that comes as a response to or retribution for deeds or misdeeds committed against or by one's ancestor(s). Figures largely in the "first" gothic romance, Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*. Example: A deserved ancestral curse can be found in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables*. In the story, Colonel Pyncheon steals the home and land of Matthew Maule, who, in turn, curses the Colonel and his descendants for the Colonel's heinous act. A slight variation of this convention is the "burden of the past," which, like the ancestral curse, concerns misfortunes and evil befalling one as a result of another's past actions. However, this particular form is not necessarily restricted to one character and his or her descendants, and usually the actions which have caused the present character's ill fate occur closer to the present than in the case of the ancestral curse. Such an example exists in Henry James' *The Turn of the Screw*, when the two children are "possessed" by the evil spirits of the dead maid and caretaker. Of course, characters in a gothic story can also be haunted by their *own* burdens of the past; see the [pursued protagonist](#). ~Kala Aaron

Anti-Catholicism A frequent and, for some critics, foundational feature of early Protestant gothic fiction. In this fiction Catholicism comes to be associated with forces of horrid repression, greedy corruption, and mysterious persecution, wrapped in the cloaks of a

superstition that prevents scrutiny of authority. The frequent appearance of the [Inquisition](#) in the first gothics epitomizes all of these things. Example: (from Fred Frank) In his Gothified anti-Catholic tragedy, *Coligny*, Baculard d'Arnaud anticipated the fiendish Catholicism of the English horror novel of the late 1790s by mounting a morbid pageant of Catholic maliciousness and Protestant suffering that featured malicious Trappist fathers, "Corridors, labyrinthes, et caveaux de châteaux," and other prime examples of Gothic scenery and atmosphere. The play was set during the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, an apt historical choice that evoked the kind of atmosphere of religious terror later common in the pages of the Gothic from Lewis's *Monk* to "The Spaniard's Tale" in Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer*. The virulent anticlericalism of *Coligny* would leave its mark on future French Gothic drama as seen in the theme and structure of Boutet de Monvel's Gothic extravaganza of monkish cruelty, *Les Victimes de clôitrées* (1792).

Body-Snatching (grave-robbing) Body-snatching is the act of stealing corpses from graves, tombs or morgues. This act was quite prominent during the period of time wherein cadavers were unavailable for dissection and scientific study (early 18th century to middle 19th century). Body-snatching came to represent a particularly horrid instance of sacrilege, an invasion of religious space by an aggressive and often commercially motivated science. Knowledge of this act resulted in mass riots and even the ransacking of medical dormitories.

Example: R. L. Stevenson's "The Body-Snatcher" employs the grisly profession of corpse stealing to weave a tale in which two grave robbers are horrified to find in their latest disinterred coffin the body of a man they had previously killed and served up to the medical profession. The most famous example of a Gothic story which involves the theft of a corpse in order to bring it back to some form of life is

Frankenstein: Victor frequents "the dissecting room and the slaughter-house" for his "workshop of filthy creation"~apparently his monster comes from some kind of *assemblage*. A more recent example of body-snatching comes from Stephen King's *Pet Semetary* (actually spelled this way). In the novel, the father of a newly dead boy digs up the body hours after burial. The father proceeds to re-bury the boy, Gavin, in a place known as Pet Semetary in hopes that the child will come back to life. Although the corpse of the boy does in fact re-animate, it is controlled by an evil demon bent upon the murder of surrounding mortals. Also see [revenant](#). ~Lauren Gibson

Cemetery A cemetery defines a place which is used for the burial of the dead. This term *koimeterion* ("place of rest") was primarily applied by early Christians to the Roman catacombs~a subterranean labyrinth of galleries with recesses for tombs originally used by the city's Jewish population~and became widely used within the 15th century. All cultures seem to have participated in the idea of a cemetery in a form at some time. Paleolithic caves, temples, sanctuaries, grave mounds and necropolii are just a few different types differentiated cemeteries. Christian belief formed the idea of the cemetery as a churchyard or crypt, but we must remember that a cemetery is any place which is used to house the dead. Cemeteries are widely used in Gothic Literature as oftentimes frightening places where [revenge](#) can occur. Catacombs are especially evocative Gothic spaces because they enable the living to enter below ground a dark labyrinth resonating with the presences and mysteries of the dead.



Example: Friedrich, Caspar David

Cloister Cemetery in the Snow

1817-19

Oil on canvas

121 x 170 cm

Destroyed 1945, formerly in the National Gallery, Berlin ~Lauren Gibson

Claustrophobia An abnormal dread of being confined in a close or narrow space. Often attributed to actual physical [imprisonment or entrapment](#), claustrophobia can also figure more generally as an indicator of the victim's sense of helplessness or horrified mental awareness of being enmeshed in some dark, inscrutable destiny. If one

were to formulate a poetics of space for the gothic experience, claustrophobia would comprise a key element of that definition.

Example: Sophia Lee's *The Recess* chronicles the story of two ill-fated sisters literally born into an underground recess; in this novel the idea of claustrophobia extends beyond just the obvious physical entrapment to serve as a metaphor of woman's *recessive* existence in a world of cruel court and male intrigue. Another intriguing example can be found in Melville's "Bartelby, the Scrivener." Bartelby occupies a very small and dark cubicle. It has no view other than that of a brick wall. This small space without much light and no view creates a feeling of claustrophobia, but, oddly, this sense seems to afflict the narrator and reader more than it does the inscrutable scrivener. ~Elizabeth Thomas

Gothic Counterfeit A playful fakery of authenticity. From the *Castle of Otranto* (1764) onwards, many gothic texts present themselves as an editor's recovery and presentation of some ancient text, cloaking the true author's writing of the story. Such "counterfeit" framing narratives frequently complicate the [point of view](#) and "authenticity" of gothic stories. Jerald Hogle has written extensively about the "counterfeit" as a trope of Gothic textual instability. Examples: William Beckford's infamous *Vathek* first appeared as a counterfeit editor's recovery of an anonymous translation of an Arabian tale. Henry James' "The Friend of the Friends" is presented as excerpts from a young woman's diary retrieved by an un-named narrator, when, of course, the tale is by Henry James. ~Jody Kemp

Devil The Devil, as portrayed in Judaism and Christianity, stands as a spirit of incarnate evil who rules over a dark kingdom. This spirit stands in constant opposition to God. The actual term 'Devil' comes from the Latin term *diabolus* which is an adjective meaning

slandorous. Within the *Septuagint*, the Greek translation of the Bible, the *diabolus* is translated as the Hebrew "he-satan". Also within this translation, the *diabolus* is characterized as God's personal spy who travels the earth to gather information concerning human existence. Later, in Jewish tradition, the term *satan* becomes the proper *Satan* who is seen as an adversary of human beings as well as God. The base of this belief possibly stems from Persian philosophy. In many areas of Jewish thought, *Satan* is linked with the idea of evil impulses, i.e. the Devil made me do it. Milton's powerful characterization of a brilliant, still-proud, and almost tragic *Satan* in *Paradise Lost* profoundly influenced the evolution of the Gothic [villain-hero](#).

Examples: There generally exist two different ways that the old Adversary can appear in Gothic works, ways that tell us much about the moral universe of the literary work. If, as in Bloch's *Rosemary's Baby*, the Devil's visitation is arbitrary and he selects a good or innocent person as his victim, we witness a dark, pessimistic moral universe, in which an expansive sense of evil randomly blights the human world. If, on the other hand, the victim deserves demonic punishment (for example, Ambrosio in Lewis's *The Monk*), his appearance signals a more traditional and Christian moral universe, in which sinners receive their due punishment. The literary stakes get a bit higher in variations of the Faust legend, in which *Satan* appeals to potentially noble human qualities (e.g. the thirst for knowledge) but twists those qualities in a way that parallels his own alienation from God. ~Lauren Gibson

Doppelgänger *Dopplegänger* comes from German; literally translated, it means "doublegoer." A *dopplegänger* is often the ghostly counterpart of a living person. It can also mean a double, alter ego, or even another person who has the same name. In analyzing the *dopplegänger* as a psychic projection caused by unresolved anxieties, Otto Rank described

the double as possessing traits both complementary and antithetical to the character involved. Example: In *Psycho*, by Robert Bloch, Norman Bates becomes so distraught after killing his mother in a jealous rage that he gradually takes on her personality. She becomes his alter ego, and by the end of the novel has taken over his mind completely. Other famed doubles in Gothic lore include Jekyll/Hyde, Victor Frankenstein/his monster, Caleb Williams/Falkland, and Jane Eyre/Bertha. Perhaps the most perfect literary example of a *doppelgänger* can be found in Henry James' "The Jolly Corner." ~Jessica Dunlap

Dreaming / Nightmares Dreaming is characterized as a form of mental activity that takes place during the act of sleep. Dreams invoke strong emotions within the dreamer, such as ecstasy, joy and terror. Dreams dredge up these deep emotions and premonitions that reflect tellingly upon the dreamer, what one might conceal during waking hours but what emerges in sleep to haunt and arouse the dreamer. It is most likely due to this heightened emotional state that dreams are used so often within Gothic Literature. For by invoking dream states within their characters, authors are able to illustrate emotions on a more unmediated and, oftentimes, terrifying level. Dreams reveal to the reader what the character is often too afraid to realize about himself or herself. Dreaming also has an ancient relation with the act of foretelling wherein the future is glimpsed in the dream state. The actual term nightmare seems to be a bastardization of the Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon term *mara*. A mara is defined as a demon which sits upon the chests of sleepers and brings bad dreams. Most cultures seemed to characterize nightmares as being caused by demons; for example, in Germany the demon is known as an Alp, in relation to elf. Etymological confusion led English writers and painters to portray graphically the nightmare as a night + horse (mare): see [Fuseli's](#)

[famous example](#). An important point concerning the dream state was proposed by Sigmund Freud at the start of the 20th century. Freud believed that a unique mental process is used within dreams that is rarely activated during the waking hours. He defined this state as the "primary process" and theorized that this state was marked by a more primitive thought process ruled by the emotions. This theory helps explain widespread occurrence of dreams in Gothic Literature as a state during which characters express their deepest emotions of horror and terror. Freud essentially "psychologizes" the older, folk (and still prevalent) tradition that dreams foretell future events: what the ancients widely and superstitiously regarded as portents, Freud read as telling illuminations of the buried psychic life of individuals--and their success in dealing with these dream-state phantoms might very well direct their future success in life. Examples: Ancient literatures contain many examples of dreams with prophetic content, such as Clytemnestra's dream of a viper at her breast (signifying Orestes' return) in *The Libation Bearers*. Perhaps the most famous Gothic example occurs in Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Following two years of difficult work, Victor Frankenstein re-animates a once dead corpse. However, the elation he expected to feel at this conquest does not occur because he is horrified at the monster's loathsome appearance. Exhausted and saddened by his prolonged work and dashed expectations, he falls into a dream state that begins with his kissing of Elizabeth, his love. However, this kiss changes her in the most drastic way as she transforms into the rotting corpse of Caroline, Victor's dead mother. Upon awakening from this horrifying dream, Victor finds himself staring into the face of the monster he has created. Multiple interpretations of this dream exist, most linking Victor's forbidden appropriation of the female act of creating life to the women in his life; it also is prophetic in a way, signalling the eventual death of Elizabeth. On a horrifying if crude level of psychoanalytic interpretation, the dream can also be read as

Mary Shelley's nightmare confrontation with her *own* mother, who died giving her birth. Within Stephen King's novel *Bag of Bones*, an author named Mike Noonan is plagued with dreams. These dreams involve the death of his wife as well as frightening visions of the summer home that he now inhabits full time. They are also interspersed with nightmares, acts of [sleepwalking](#), and glimpses of the future. Eventually, through the recurrence of these dreams, Noonan is able to discover the events surrounding the death of his wife as well as a dark fact concerning his summer home that was secreted by the entire town. Finally, Noonan's glimpses of the future within the dreams enable him to save the life of an innocent child from an avenging spiritual curse. ~Lauren Gibson

Entrapment & Imprisonment: A favorite horror device of the Gothic finds a person confined or trapped, such as being shackled to a floor or hidden away in some dark cell or cloister. This sense of there being *no way out* contributes to the [claustrophobic](#) psychology of Gothic space. Example: Poe's "Fall of the House of Usher." Madeline Usher is buried alive in a coffin (the ultimate entrapment) to cure a strange malady but then left by Roderick who thinks she is dead. The reader experiences the full Gothic horror of her awakening within her own tomb. For an illustration of imprisonment from a Gothic chapbook, visit [Douglas Castle; or, the Cell of Mystery](#) ~Elizabeth Thomas

The Explained Supernatural Bearing close similarities to what Todorov will later term the "[uncanny](#)," the explained supernatural is a genre of the Gothic in which the laws of everyday reality remain intact and permit an explanation or even dismissal of allegedly supernatural phenomena. Example: In Ann Radcliffe's novels, the author allows both the character and reader to question throughout the entire novel

whether the weird phenomena described are happening in a setting of known laws of nature or in a setting where miracles or supernatural intervention must be in place to account for the strange events. At the end of the novel Radcliffe always reveals her rationalist allegiances by identifying normal explanations for what seemed supernatural events.

~Michelle Bryson

Exorcism Exorcism is the religiously based act of forcing the Devil or a demon from the body of a possessed person. This act is usually performed by a religious figure, such as a priest or shaman, and involves the performing of rituals. Various cultures including the Greeks, Babylonians and Egyptians all had forms of what we term today as exorcism. For instance, the Babylonian exorcism consisted of the formation and eventual destruction of a clay doll fashioned in the shape of the demon. Supposedly, with the destruction of the doll the Devil or demon would be forced from the mortal body. Many cultures and religions practice the act of exorcism to this day. It is known that the current Pope of the Roman Catholic Church has participated in an exorcism although he refuses to divulge the exact details.

Example: William Peter Blatty's *The Exorcist* ~Lauren Gibson

The Female Gothic One of the earliest forms of Gothic literature, the Female Gothic often aims to socialize and educate its female readers and is usually morally conservative. Yet the Female Gothic can also express criticism of patriarchal, male-dominated structures and serve as an expression of female independence. This form is often centered on gender differences and oppression. Female Gothic works usually include a female protagonist who is pursued and persecuted by a villainous patriarchal figure in unfamiliar settings and terrifying landscape. While achieving a considerable degree of terror and chills,

the Female Gothic usually eschews the more overt and graphic scenes of violence and sexual perversion found in [the literature of horror](#), often opting for the ["explained supernatural"](#) instead of the real thing. This kind of fiction first achieved controversial prominence in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. The initial development of this form was led by writers such as Clara Reeve, Sophia Lee, and Anne Radcliffe, and then later by Mary Shelley, the Brontes and Christina Rossetti ("Goblin Market"). A durable strain of the Gothic, it can be found everywhere in later 19th and 20th century women writers and even in the Harlequin romances of today.

For a helpful overview of the Female Gothic, visit [UVa's page on the subject](#).

For information on a 6-volume edition of Female Gothic writers, edited by Gary Kelly, visit Pickering's and Chatto's [Varieties of Female Gothic](#)

Also see Diane Hoeveler's reflections on the subject from her course syllabus on the [Female Gothic](#)

-Katherine Jordan, Starla Bailey, and Marnite Zachery

Ghost

What is the Gothic? (a very provisional sketch)



Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* introduced the term "gothic story" to the literary world in 1764. While it presented, at first, a topic for argument and inflammatory rhetoric, over the years the gothic has come to be respected as a venerable albeit still controversial genre. However, due to its inherently supernatural, surreal and sublime elements, it has maintained a dark and mysterious appeal. Since 1764, many authors have followed in the footsteps of Walpole, including such diverse names as Anne Radcliffe, Edgar Allen Poe, Bram Stoker and Shirley Jackson. This wide variety of viewpoints, however, is what makes one single, all-encompassing definition of gothic literature so very difficult to ascertain. So then, what is "the gothic"? Generally speaking, gothic literature delves into the macabre nature of humanity in its quest to satiate mankind's intrinsic desire to plumb the depths of terror. We offer seven descriptors that frequently appear in works called gothic: 1) the appearance of the supernatural, 2) the psychology of [horror and/or terror](#), 3) the poetics of the [sublime](#), 4) a sense of [mystery](#) and dread 5) the appealing [hero/villain](#), 6) [the](#)

Source URL: <http://personal.georgiasouthern.edu/~doug/goth.html#tra>
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[distressed heroine](#), and 7) strong moral closure (usually at least). But expect us to revisit this contentious issue in the near future.

Also see Diane Hoeveler's reflections on ["What is the Gothic"?](#) ~T. McDonald and James Flynn

Grotesque (1) This term originated from oddly shaped ornaments found within Roman dwellings, or grottoes, during the first century. From a literary standpoint, this term implies a mutation of the characters, plants and/or animals. This mutation transforms the normal features and/or behaviors into veritable extremes that are meant to be frightening and/or disturbingly comic (Cornwell 273). Example: An example of the term grotesque can be found within the short story "Rappaccini's Daughter." Within the tale, the flowers found within the garden of the inventor have been mutated into beautiful harbringers of death. While the physical features of the plants have grown more exquisite, their interior workings have become a frightening caricature of normal plant-life. (2) The term grotesque also defines a work in which two separate modes, comedy and tragedy, are mixed. The result is a disturbing fiction wherein comic circumstances prelude horrific tragedy and vice versa.

Example: Within the short story "Revelation," penned by Flannery O'Connor, the author blends the comic aspects of the conversation between the two elder women within the tragic appearance and anger of the young girl. Comedy and tragedy continue to mix throughout the tale as the elder woman, Mrs. Turpin, comes to discover the "true" nature of God as a result of the young woman's outburst. A perfect example of the grotesquely [sublime](#) is her heavenly vision while standing in the hog-pen. ~Lauren Gibson

The Haunted Castle or House A dwelling that is inhabited by or

visited regularly by a ghost or other supposedly supernatural being.

Examples: Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. Walpole's novel first introduced to gothic literature its single most influential convention, the haunted castle. The castle is the main setting of the story and the center of activity. It is an old, dark, decaying castle plagued by an finds herself haunted by that "horrid paper." Some other novels that re-tool this durable gothic convention include the haunted house in *The Amityville Horror* by Jay Anson and *Psycho* by Robert Bloch. *Coastal Ghosts* by Nancy Rhyne offers a study of haunted houses in our Georgia and South Carolina low country. ~Shayla Willis

Incubus The incubus is characterized as a male demon who forces himself sexually upon mortal women as they sleep. This type of coupling is theorized to result in the subsequent births of demons, witches, sorcerers or children with noted deformities. Legend attends that the incubus and his female counterpart, the [succubus](#), were angels fallen from Heaven. The belief in incubii was very strong during the Middle Ages and stories of such attacks were common. Example: In the movie *Village of the Damned* an entire town suddenly lapses into a type of forced sleep state which lasts several hours. In the weeks following awakening, it is discovered that eight women within the town are pregnant through malign means that occurred during the sleep. Six of the eight children which result from this bizarre process are inherently evil and thrive upon the pain of others. These children are able to read minds as well as force those in close proximity to do harm to themselves. The children are finally destroyed but only after the loss of many innocent lives.

Inquisition The Inquisition was a permanent institution in the Catholic Church charged with the eradication of heresies. The judge,

or inquisitor, could bring suit against anyone. The accused had to testify against himself and did not have the right to face and question his accuser; torture became a frequent means of soliciting testimony from the accused. It was even acceptable to take testimony from criminals, persons of bad reputation, excommunicated people, and heretics. The accused did not have right to counsel, and blood relationship did not exempt one from the duty to testify against the accused. Sentences could not be appealed. Abuses by local Inquisitions early on led to reform and regulation by Rome, and in the 14th century intervention by secular authorities became common. At the end of the 15th century, under Ferdinand and Isabel, the Spanish inquisition became independent of Rome. In its dealings with converted Moslems and Jews and also illuminists, the Spanish Inquisition with its notorious *autos-da-fé*, represents a particularly dark chapter in the history of the Inquisition. ~Jessica Dunlap

The Literature of Terror vs. the Literature of Horror: Following a distinction drawn by Ann Radcliffe in her essay "[On the Supernatural in Poetry](#)", many critics rely upon a sharp division between the literatures of terror and horror.

- Works of terror create a sense of uncertain apprehension that leads to a complex fear of obscure and dreadful elements (see the [sublime](#)). The essence of terror stimulates the imagination and often challenges intellectual reasoning to arrive at a somewhat plausible explanation of this ambiguous fear and anxiety. Resolution of the terror provides a means of escape.
- Works of horror are constructed from a maze of alarmingly concrete imagery designed to induce fear, shock, revulsion, and disgust. Horror appeals to lower

mental faculties, such as curiosity and voyeurism. Elements of horror render the reader incapable of resolution and subject the reader's mind to a state of inescapable confusion and chaos. The inability to intellectualize horror inflicts a sense of obscure despair.

Examples: Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*, respectively, perfectly illustrate this divide between terror and horror and helped establish the distinction throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The former causes the reader to imagine and cross-examine those imaginings; the latter causes shock and disgust; the former aspires to the realm of high literature; the latter wallows in the low. But this distinction is not always clear in works that follow in the gothic tradition, and this uncertainty fuels critical debates about these works.

For more on the debate see UVa's ["Terror vs. Horror."](#) ~Betty Rigdon

The Marvelous vs. the Uncanny According to Tsvetan Todorov, a certain hesitation exists throughout a Gothic tale: the hesitation of the reader in knowing what the rules are in the game of reading. Can our understanding of familiar perceptions of reality account for strange goings-on or do we have to appeal to the *extraordinary* to account for the setting and circumstances of the mysterious story? At the novel's close, the reader makes a decision, often apart from the character's or narrator's point of view (see [unreliable narrator](#)), as to the laws that are governing the novel. If she decides that new laws of nature must be in place for the phenomena to occur, the novel is classified in the genre of "the marvelous," also called supernatural accepted. If she decides that the laws of nature as she knows them can remain unchanged and still allow for the phenomena described, the novel is in the genre of "the uncanny," or supernatural explained. Examples: Comparing the works of Horace Walpole and Clara Reeves illustrates the difference

between "marvelous" and "uncanny" works. Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* resides in the genre of the marvelous, or supernatural accepted, adopting new laws of nature for the setting and circumstances. Clara Reeves' works, on the other hand, fall into the genre of the uncanny, or supernatural explained, citing known laws of nature as reasons for the phenomena described. She, in fact, consciously set out to rehabilitate the extravagances of Walpole's Gothic vision in *Otranto*.

For more on the debate see UVa's ["The Uncanny and the Fantastic."](#) ~ Michelle Bryson

Masochism The word "masochism" is derived from Chevalier Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, an Austrian writer. Masochism is a psychosexual perversion where one person gains erotic pleasure by having pain inflicted on them. A looser definition is used to describe the behavior of a person who actively seeks out pain and/or humiliation. Example: In his book *Venus in Furs*, Leopold uses an alias to describe the abuse he suffered as a child in the hands of a fur jacket-wearing aunt, and the consequences it had on his adult life. In one scene, the aunt whips young "Severin" (Leopold) and then forces him to get down on his knees, thank her, and kiss her hand. This is his first real experience with females, and it is the one that shapes his life: "In her fur jacket she seemed to [him] like a wrathful queen, and from then on [his] aunt became the most desirable woman on God's earth" (Grosz). Severin/Leopold spends the rest of his life searching for a woman to dress like his aunt and beat him for sexual gratification. ~ Jessica Dunlap

Mist A grouping of water particles due to a change in atmosphere. This convention in Gothic Literature is often used to

obscure objects (see Burke's notion of the [sublime](#)) by reducing visibility or to prelude the insertion of a terrifying person or thing.

Example: Within the short story "The Mist," written by Stephen King, a typical summer day in Maine is transformed into a strange new world. An odd mist, clearly demarcated, begins to creep upon the town and by midday it has taken it over. However, terrifying creatures ranging from insect-like birds to dog-sized spiders reside within the mist and are bent upon destroying any mortal who dares venture outside. Also see the mist which preludes the horrific in George's ascent of Arthur's Seat in Hogg's *Confessions*. -Lauren Gibson

Mystery A term derived from the Latin word *mysterium*. Mystery is also closely related to the Latin word *mysterium tremendum*, which is a term used to express the overwhelming awe and sense of unknowable mystery felt by those to whom some aspect of God or of divine being is revealed. Mystery is an event or situation that appears to overwhelm understanding. Its province is the unnatural, unmentioned, and unseen. Examples: In Edgar Allen Poe's "Tell-Tale Heart," the narrator is haunted by the mysterious eye. The frightening eye drives the narrator insane: "I think it was his eye . . . He [the victim] had the eye of the vulture." "The Fall of the House of Usher" is also filled with mystery, especially that of the unmentioned. What is the cause of Lady Madeline of Usher's malady? Why is Roderick Usher terrified of the unseen? What is the dreaded Usher family secret? -Shayla Willis

Necromancy Necromancy is the black art of communicating with the dead. This is usually done to obtain information about the future, but can also be used for other purposes, such as getting the dead to perform deeds of which humans are not capable. The conjurer often stood in a circle, such as a pentagram, in order to protect himself from

the dead spirit, yet he was often overpowered by the spirit. Examples: The most famous examples of necromancy can be found in literary renditions of the Faust legend, from Marlow to Johann Wolfgang von Goethe to Byron with his *Manfred*. In these works, Faust not only speaks with the devil in order to strike a deal but necromantically invokes various dead, famous figures from the past for his amusement and edification. ~John Belcher

Necrophilia Necrophilia is the sexual attraction to human corpses, often times fresh corpses. In Gothic literature, necrophilia most often occurs in one of two forms. The first, tragic necrophilia, occurs when a character's love (often times a beautiful young woman, like in Poe's *Ligeia*) dies but the love for the actual person remains, perverting itself into a continued romance with the earthly remains or a purposefully-selected replacement. The second, necrosadism, occurs when a lover is scorned (like Emily Grierson in Faulkner's *A Rose for Emily*) and decides to murder his/her partner, but keeps the corpse as a reminder that the deceased will never escape.

~Skye Miles, Columbia College

Gothic Parody A form of satirical criticism or comic mockery that imitates the style and manners of a particular writer, often employing, self-consciously and ironically, the narrative devices of the Gothic (Jones 271). Parody of the gothic often relies on travesty and burlesque: a favorite strategy transports the exotic, aristocratic, antique, and foreign setting of the gothic tale to a contemporary lower-class British setting, and lets the resulting dislocation indict both gothic absurdity and the English taste for it. But some parodies can express some sympathy for their alleged targets, confirming Graeme Stone's recent contention that Romantic parody involves a “simultaneous

commitment to exalted visions and to a renegade impulse which mockingly dissolves them” (*Parodies of the Romantic Age* xxi).

Example: Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*. The heroine, Catherine Moreland, is introduced as an avid reader of the gothic. At the opening of the story, Catherine is reading Radcliffe's *The Mystery's of Udolpho*. Later, she's given a list of other gothic-style books to read. The list includes *Castle of Wolfenbach*, *Clermont*, *Mysterious Warnings*, *Necromancer of the Black Forest*, *Midnight Bell*, *Orphan of the Rhine*, and *Horrid Mysteries* (all titles once regarded as inventions of Austen but which 20th century scholarship has tracked down as real gothics: Austen *knew* the target of her parody). Catherine Moreland's gothic readings and predispositions cause her to dramatically misread ordinary events~she in essence gothicizes events~and these misreadings lead to her embarrassment. Austen gently suggests that overly avid reading of gothic literature will cause one to lose sound moral judgement. Mr. Tilney more clearly states Austen's viewpoint when he says, "the art of art lies in its power to deceive . . . [I]t is not so much a question of what we read: we must exercise our judgment after all, and not mistake fantasy for reality." So maybe there's nothing inherently wrong with Gothic tales; it's just how critically and well we read them.

Go here for more on the [Northanger Canon](#). Go [here](#) for the funny cover and edition of a Paper Library Gothic edition (USA 1965) of Austen's novel that markets it as serious gothic title! ~Jody Kemp

Possession The popularity of belief in demonic possession seems to have originated within Christian Theology during the Middle Ages. During this time, Christians lived in fear concerning the war being waged between God and the Devil over every mortal soul. Hence, this fear of possession seemed to culminate into an act that could be viewed by the mortal eye. This act is defined as the forced possession of a mortal body by the Devil or one of his demons.

There are two types of possession and either can be voluntary or involuntary. Voluntary possession seems to involve a willing exchange in the form of some compact between evil spirit and mortal, often involving wealth, power or goods; involuntary possession occurs when the devil randomly selects an unwitting host. The two types of possession consist of the transference of the Devil or demon directly into the mortal body or the sending of the Devil or demon into the body by a third party, usually a mortal dabbler in the dark arts. Following the act, the possessed is said to show many symptoms including abnormal strength, personality changes, fits, convulsions, bodily odors resembling sulfur, lewd and lascivious actions, the ability to levitate, the ability to speak in tongues or the ability to foretell future events. Many religions acknowledge the act of possession still today, most notably the Catholic Church. There seem to be three ways in which to end a possession. These include the voluntary departure of the possessing Devil or demon, the involuntary departure of the possessing Devil or demon through an act such as Example: R. L. Stevenson's "Thrawn Janet" depicts the body (later realized as a dead body) of a servant woman possessed by the devil. ~Lauren Gibson

The Pursued Protagonist Refers to the idea of a pursuing force that relentlessly acts in a severely negative manner on a character. This persecution often implies the notion of some sort of a curse or other form of terminal and utterly unavoidable damnation, a notion that usually suggests a return or "hangover" of traditional religious ideology to chastize the character for some real or imagined wrong against the moral order. Example: This crime and retribution pattern interestingly emerges in the work of many "free-thinkers" and political radicals of the Romantic Age, including such haunted and hounded figures as Godwin's Caleb Williams and St. Leon, Coleridge's Mariner, and Mary Shelly's Frankenstein, who both is pursued by and pursues

his monster. A classic contemporary example of an infamous pursuer/pursued can be found in Anne Rice's Vampire series. These works typically employ a [villain-hero](#), the vampire, who is both compelled and pursued by a greater force that causes him "to wander the earth in a state of permanent exile, persecuting others as a result of a contradiction of being which is itself the mark of his own persecution by another" (Mulvey-Roberts 115). The Wandering Jew is perhaps the archetypically pursued/pursuing protagonist. ~Drew McCray

Pursuit of the Heroine The pursuit of a virtuous and idealistic (and usually poetically inclined) young woman by a villain, normally portrayed as a wicked, older but still potent aristocrat. While in many early Gothic novels such a chase occurs across a Mediterranean forest and/or through a subterranean labyrinth, the pursuit of the heroine is by no means limited to these settings. This pursuit represents a threat to the young lady's ideals and morals (usually meaning her virginity), to which the heroine responds in the early works with a passive courage in the face of danger; later gothic heroines progressively become more active and occasionally effective in their attempts to escape this pursuit and indict patriarchy. Examples: The pursuit of the heroine can be physical, such as in Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, or more of an emotional/mental pursuit, as found in Joyce Carol Oates "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

Revenant

The return of the dead to terrorize or to settle some score with the living.

Examples: See "The Ostler" (first published in the Christmas 1855 number of *Household Words*), which redeploys the figure of the revenant or ghostly being who "returns" to life to achieve its sensational

effects. The Dream Woman is a knife-wielding [succubus](#) whose horrid appearance at her victim's bedside is one of Wilke Collins's best night shades and jolting moments:

"Between the foot of his bed and the closed door there stood a woman with a knife in her hand, looking at him. He was stricken speechless with terror, but he did not lose the preternatural clearness of his faculties, and he never took his eyes off the woman. She said not a word as they stared each other in the face, but she began to move slowly towards the left-hand side of the bed. Speechless, with no expression in her face, with no noise following her footfall, she came closer and closer and stopped and slowly raised the knife. He laid his right arm over his throat to save it; but, as he saw the knife coming down, threw his hand across the bed to the right side, and jerked his body over that way just as the knife descended on the mattress within an inch of his shoulder."

See also James Hogg's "Mary Burnett" and M.G. Lewis's famous "Bleeding Nun."

Revenge Revenge is characterized as the act of repaying someone for a harm that the person has caused; the idea also points back generically to one of the key influences upon Gothic literature: the revenge tragedies of Elizabethan and Jacobean drama. Revenge may be enacted upon a loved one, a family member, a friend, an object or even an area. Within Gothic Literature, revenge is notably prominent and can be enacted by or upon mortals as well as spirits. Revenge can take many forms, such as harm to body, harm to loved ones, and harm to family. The most Gothic version of revenge in Gothic Literature is the idea that it can be a guiding force in the revenance of the dead.

Example: Within "The Cask of Amontillado," written by Edgar Allen Poe, a carefully planned act of revenge takes place. Montessor

has become aggrieved by the insults of Fortunato and vows that he will repay his friend for this crime. Montressor is crafty and careful in his planning: he gives Fortunato no reason to doubt his continued friendship. One evening, Montressor finds Fortunato intoxicated on medoc and feels that the time is right to exact his retribution. Through a course of conversation focusing upon the sampling of a type of Amontillado, Montressor lures Fortunato into his family crypt and proceeds to brick him into a wall. There he leaves Fortunato to die a most extended death.



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Romanticism/Dark Romanticism Why does the Romantic era offer, amidst its soaring affirmations of the human imagination and the passions, powerful explorations of the dark side of human nature? Why, right alongside (or maybe just beneath the surface of) the dreams of "natural piety," the dignity of the individual, and the redemptive power of art do we find the nightmare world of the gothic, the grotesque, and the psychotic? Critics and literary historians have come up with three main ideas:

1. the [sleep of reason produces monsters](#): the Romantic rebellion against Right Reason undermines the moral, primarily didactic role of art, opening it up to all kinds of previously forbidden or irrational and maybe even immoral subjects; an aesthetics based on the imagination can just as well lead us down a "dark chasm" as deliver us to a new paradise.
2. "reason" is in-itself a kind of sleep (Blake calls it "Newton's stony sleep"); over-reliance on rationalism will invariably breed fascination with the terms it banishes; we remember that the first gothic novels came during the zenith of the Enlightenment; this is essentially a Freudian model: the return of repressed content to haunt the official aesthetic doctrine~the eruption of the id upon a too restrictive super-ego.
3. "sinners in the hands of an angry God": this theory stresses the return of traditional understandings of guilt and divine retribution upon the freethinkers of this revolutionary age; this is a rich source of terror, from Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" to Shelley's *Frankenstein*. James Rieger calls it the "Protestant as Prometheus" complex. (See the [Wandering Jew](#) entry.)

For what the Romantic poets wrote and thought about the Gothic, go to [Gothic Literature: What the Romantic Writers](#)

[Read.](#)

Sadism The word “sadism” was coined to describe the writings of Donatien-Alphonse-Francois, the Marquis de Sade. Sadism is a sexual perversion where one person gains gratification by inflicting physical or mental pain on others. It can also mean a delight in torment or excessive cruelty. Example: In his book, *120 Days of Sodom*, the Marquis describes and justifies acts of sexual perversion:

One must do violence to the object of one's desire; when it surrenders, the pleasure is greater . . . The degradation which characterizes the state into which you plunge him by punishing him pleases, amuses, and delights him. Deep down he enjoys having gone so far as to deserve being treated in such a way . . . It has, moreover, been proven that horror, nastiness, and the frightful are what give pleasure when one fornicates. Beauty is a simple thing; ugliness is the exceptional thing. And fiery imaginations, no doubt, always prefer the extraordinary thing to the simple thing.

~ Jessica Dunlap

Sensibility Deals with an acutely sensitive response to the afflicted or pathetic in literature, art, and life. Originally formulated by Adam Smith as a positive force of compassion and moral sympathy, sensibility soon degenerated into something of a cult wherein its members (usually upper-class women or those aspiring to be so) proved their exquisite sensitivity through tears, blushes, palpitations, and fits of fainting. Many gothic heroines exhibit sensibility, but the term becomes a hotly contested one in the culture wars of the 1780's and '90's.' Examples: We generally associate sensibility with the poetic reveries of Radcliffe's heroines and her many followers. Jane Austen's

Northanger Abbey and *Sense and Sensibility* parody this sentiment. An example of how slippery the term can be in terms of gender and politics: Mary Wollstonecraft accuses Edmund Burke of a gothic sensibility in his swooning sympathy for the sufferings of the French court. To learn more, visit UVA's [Dictionary of Sensibility](#) ~John Belcher

Somnambulism Somnambulism, better known as sleepwalking, exists as a type of dissociated mental state which occurs during sleep. Studies indicate that sleepwalking occurs during the period of "deep sleep," a time during which no dreams are taking place within the mind of the sleeper. While sleepwalking, a person may engage in a varied array of motor activities deemed as common during waking life. Many onlookers find this act to be frightening, noting that the sleepwalker is not propelled by any type of lucid mental activity. Through sleepwalking, characters often reveal hidden sources of stress and replay acts of guilt. Example *par excellence*: Charles Brockden Brown's *Edgar Huntly*

Spiritualism

The Sublime The definition of this key term has evolved from the early days of Longinus through to various 18th and 19th century formulations. Always a contested term, the idea of the sublime is essential to an understanding of Gothic poetics and, especially, the attempt to defend or justify the literature of terror. Longinus believes that power is the essence of the sublime style, as it literally moves or transports its hearers, and he offers among many examples a rare reference to the Hebrew scriptures, Genesis 1:3, "And God said, Let there be light; and there was light." This is an example of the absolute power in which word and effect are one. Longinus also

foreshadows the development of the sublime in England in his attention to the rhetorical effect of natural forces: "Nature impels us to admire not a small river that ministers to our necessities but the Nile, the Ister, and the Rhine." "Samuel Monk's study of the sublime argues that the term became a repository for all the emotions and literary effects unacceptable to the dominant neo-classical virtues of balance, order and rationality" (Milbank). Edmund Burke locates the sublime purely in terms of fear, the source of which is the "king of terrors" himself~ Death~ and a sense of possible threat to the subject's self-preservation: "In essence, whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain, and danger, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime; it is productive of the strongest emotion which the mind is capable of feeling" ([*A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* \[1759\]](#).) The threat must not be direct, else "delight" (a lesser form of literary "pleasure") cannot be experienced from the sublime moment. Burke's insistence on framing and distancing the sublime moment



helped shape a Gothic aesthetic in which obscurity, suspense, uncertainty, ambivalence, and play attend presentations of terror. Anna Letitia Aikin (later Barbauld) and John Aikin follow Burke's lead but go a step further in proclaiming a positive "pleasure" to be derived from the sublime in ways that anticipate later romantic theorists: "A strange and unexpected event awakens in the mind, and keeps it on the stretch; and where the agency of invisible beings is introduced, of 'forms unseen, and far mightier than we,' our imagination, darting forth, explores with rapture the new world which is laid open to its view, and rejoices in the expansion of its powers. Passion and fancy cooperating elevate the soul to its highest pitch; and the pain of terror is lost in amazement" ("[On the Pleasure](#)

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[Derived from Objects of Terror" \).](#)

Kant's *Critique of Judgement* (1790) sees sublime pleasure as disinterested because it seeks no knowledge of the object. In Kant the sublime becomes a heightened and ennobled capacity of thinking in the human subject which enables the mind to rise above its physical limitations after an initial check to its vital forces. In essence for Kant, the sublime is not so much located in the direct experiencing of a terrific object but in the way that experience signals an apprehension of the infinite capacities of the mind's imaginative powers. (Indeed, in language that recalls Wordsworth's sublime mountain ascents, Kant speaks of the mind *usurping* upon nature during these visionary moments.)

One does find in Gothic literature a dialectic between the Burkean model of endangered subjectivity, and Kantian or idealist belief in the power of the mind to sublime, to rise victorious over opposition to desire or imagination's reach. In the Gothic sense, the idea of terrible nature (lightening, thunder, tornadoes) is extended to include supernatural beings, witchcraft, and many other vague and extraordinary phenomena. Visit UVa's [The Sublime and the Domestic](#) for more discussion of this complex term.

Example: A good Burkean example of the sublime (somewhat subdued) occurs when Radcliffe's Emily from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* first sees the the Campagna of Italy:

As the travellers still ascended among the pine-forests, steep rose over steep, the mountains seemed to multiply as they went, and what was the summit of one eminence proved to be the only base of another. At length they reached a little plain where the drivers stopped to rest the mules, whence a scene of such extent and magnificence opened below, as drew even from Madame Montoni a note of admiration. Emily lost, for a moment, her

sorrows in the immensity of nature.

Wordsworth's ascents of the Simplon Pass and Mount Snowdon provide classic Kantian examples of the sublime (see Books 6 and 14 of the 1850 *Prelude*): "in such strength / Of usurpation, when the light of sense / Goes out, but with a flash that has revealed / The invisible world, doth Greatness make abode." A powerful example of the clash between "endangering" and "idealist" presentations of the sublime occurs in George Colwan's ascent of Arthur's Seat in Hogg's *Confessions of a Justified Sinner*. Hoping to break free from Edinburgh and weirdly omnipresent persecution by his dark brother, George at first experiences an epiphany in nature, but this Romantic reverie is very gothically transgressed upon by the appearance of a horribly demonic, "carnivorous" spectre emerging from the mists. See a similar example of Gothic usurpation of a Romantically sublime space in the monster's interruption of Victor's Alpine reveries in *Frankenstein*. ~Jody Kemp

Succubus The succubus is characterized as a female counterpart of the incubus. The core of this belief is said to stem from the legend in Jewish folklore of a demon named Lilith. In later Jewish literature, Lilith is identified as Adam's first wife who ran from him instead of acting as his subservient. Following, God sent three angels to bring her back to Adam. If she refused, one of her children would be killed each day. Lilith refused and, in an act of vengeance, vowed that she would bring harm to future infants of other mothers. Belief in Lilith still persists, in some cultures, to this day. Example: Roasrio / Mathilda is a compelling instance of a succubus, bent upon awakening the sexual desires of Lewis's Monk and leading him to destruction. ~Lauren Gibson

Supernatural Gadgetry Supernatural gadgetry refers to the physical elements in Gothic works that represent the means by which the various supernatural beings and or powers display their presence and uncanny abilities. Some common examples of supernatural props are "vocal and mobile portraits; veiled statues that come to life; animated skeletons; doors, gates, portals, hatchways, and other means of egress which open and close independently and inappropriately; secret messages or manuscripts delivered by specters; forbidden chambers or sealed compartments; and casket lids seen in the act of rising" (Frank 437). Example: Supernatural gadgetry can be found in John and A. L. Aikin's "Sir Bertrand; A Fragment". When Sir Bertrand first attempts to enter the antique mansion, the light moves about by some unknown power, and the door mysteriously slams shut as soon as the knight enters the castle. And a casket lid mysteriously opens to reveal a sarcophagal *belle dame*. ~Drew McCray

Superstition A pivotal term for the religious and political dimensions of Gothic Literature, especially its reception. "Superstition" generally gathered its sharply negative connotations in the late 18th century from two sources: 1) Protestant disdain for the ritualistic and miraculous character of Catholic worship; 2) rationalist opposition to unexamined systems of belief that impeded the search for truth (see the early Wordsworth: "Science with joy saw Superstition fly / Before the lustre of Religion's eye; . . . / No shadowy forms entice the soul aside, / Secure she walks, Philosophy her guide"). The term is also frequently invoked by conservative writers to characterize the potential volatility of the masses (*The Monthly Review*, 1794: "that superstition which debilitates the mind, that ignorance which propagates terror"). Or it can figure as a kind of cultural malaise, a psychic compensation for a time of troubles (Wordsworth in his "Preface" to *The Borderers* on the character of Rivers, but also of his age: "Having shaken off the obligations of religion and

morality in a dark and tempestuous age, it is probable that such a character will be infected with a tinge of superstition"). In his discussion of the sublime, Kant distinguishes the good religious life, which is characterized by a kind of quiet sublimity, from superstition: "The latter establishes in the mind, not reverence for the sublime, but fear and apprehension of the all-powerful Being to whose will the terrified man sees himself subject, without according Him any high esteem." Early critics of the Gothic constantly accuse it of appealing to and fueling readers' inclination for "superstition." Example: (from Lorne Macdonald of the University of Calgary). Superstition is unanimously and repeatedly denounced (largely as a dyslogism for Catholicism) in *The Monk* (e.g., 35, 82, 144, 154, 159, 192, 198, 222, 236, 239, 334-45, 360, 413 in Peck's edition) while at the same time (309, 320, 324, 331, 349) the word is also used to indicate a belief in the supernatural--a belief which, as Mervyn Nicholson has pointed out, is perfectly justified in the world of the book.

Freud's *Unheimlich* (the Uncanny) "For Freud, the uncanny derives its terror not from something external, alien, or unknown but--on the contrary--from something strangely familiar which defeats our efforts to separate ourselves from it" (Morris 222). According to Freud, we find things to be uncanny (*unheimlich*) when they are familiar to us (*heimlich* or "belonging to the home") yet also somehow foreign or disturbing. Uncanny feelings can arise when something seemingly inconsequential in our everyday lives calls forth repressed content stemming from



past experience, especially experiences linking back to childhood and our passage into sexual awareness. Examples: A non-gothic example of this train of association can be found in Virginia Woolf's story "The Mark on the Wall." The story in itself isn't all that scary, but it is a good example of the uncanny. Woolf's story tells of a woman who notices a small mark on the wall just above the mantle. Rather than getting up from her chair to investigate the mark, she sits and ponders what the mark could be—exploring everything from a small nail hole to the shadow of some small protrusion. The mark itself isn't all that unfamiliar—after all how many marks do we see upon walls on a daily basis? The mark however does evoke a number of strange thoughts within the narrator, including a lyrical meditation about people who lived in the house before her.

Another, more Gothic example is "The Yellow Wallpaper" by Gilman. Here again we see a story centered upon something that is very familiar, wallpaper, which yet evokes strange feelings and hallucinations in the character. Many critics discuss Dickens' ghost stories as prime specimens of *unheimlich*. See Freud's seminal essay on E. T. A. Hoffman's "The Sandman" ("The Uncanny" [1919]), in which he explains Nathaniel's terrified association of the Sandman, an old and arguably benevolent device to get children to sleep, with the

loss of sight.

~Jody Kemp

Transformations (Shape-changing)

The metamorphosis of one being into another.

Examples: H. G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and Stevenson's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* feature horrid transformations as part of their warning about the dangers of unreflective scientific progress. King's protean *It* takes the convention to furthest extreme.

Unreliable Narrator A narrator tells a story and determines the story's point of view. An unreliable narrator, however, does not understand the importance of a particular situation or makes an incorrect conclusion or assumption about an event that he/she witnesses. An important issue in determining the *The Turn of the Screw*.

Vampire A word of Slavonic origin, a vampire is a preternatural being of a malignant nature (or a reanimated corpse) who seeks nourishment and often bodily harm by sucking the blood of the living. Usually but not always described as highly sexual beings, vampires are often but not exclusively found in European folklore.

Examples of vampires found in Gothic Literature include John Polidori's "The Vampyre," Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (which tells the story of a Transylvanian vampire Count Dracula who can only be defeated by the occultist Van Helsing), and Ann Rice's *Interview with the Vampire*, which brings to the forefront the old bloodsucker's status as a villain-hero and even (gasp) invites our sympathy for him.

Visit UVA's [exhibition on the Vampire](#) for more information and

images. ~Kelsie Mitchell

Villain-Hero (Satanic, Promethean, Byronic Hero) The villain of a story who either 1) poses as a hero at the beginning of the story or 2) simply possesses enough heroic characteristics (charisma, sympathetic past, etc) so that either the reader or the other characters see the villain-hero as more than a simple charlatan or bad guy. Three closely related types exist:

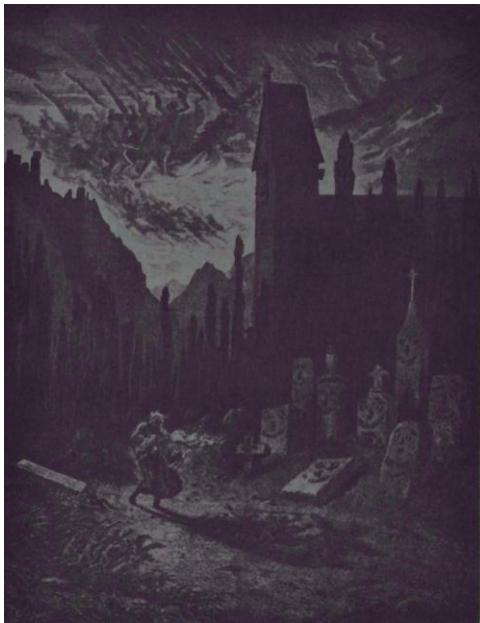
- **Satanic Hero:** a Villain-Hero whose nefarious deeds and justifications of them make him a more interesting character than the rather bland good hero. Example: The origin of this prototype comes from Romantic misreadings of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, whose Satan poets like Blake and Shelley regarded as a far more compelling figure than the moralistic God of Book III of the epic. Gothic examples: Beckford's *Vathek*, Radcliffe's *Montoni*, Wordsworth's *Rivers* (in *The Borderers*); Polidori's *Ruthven* and just about any [vampire](#).
- **Promethean:** a Villain-Hero who has done good but only by performing an overreaching or rebellious act. Prometheus from ancient Greek mythology saved mankind but only after stealing fire and ignoring Zeus' order that mankind should be kept in a state of subjugation. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* is tellingly subtitled the "Modern Prometheus."
- **Byronic Hero:** a later variation of the "anthithetically mixed" Villain-Hero. Aristocratic, suave, moody, handsome, solitary, secretive, brilliant, cynical, sexually intriguing, and nursing a secret wound, he is renowned because of his fatal attraction for female characters and

readers and continues to occasion debate about gender issues. Example: Byron's Childe Harold and, more gothically, Manfred are the best examples, but this darkly attractive and very conflicted male figure surfaces everywhere in the 19th and 20th century gothic.

~Paul Quinnell

Visigothic

The Wandering Jew Also known as Ahasuerus, Cartaphilus, Malchus, or John Buttadeus. The term originates from a legend about a Jew who either ridiculed Jesus or refused to allow him to rest at his door on his way to the



cross. As a result, Jesus condemned the Jew to roam the earth until judgement day. Some variations of the legend connect this figure to the story of Cain. God condemned Cain for killing Abel and cursed him to wander the earth with a mark upon his forehead to protect him. In Gothic works, the Wandering Jew often symbolizes the curse of immortality. Some characteristics include large, black, flashing eyes;

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a look of deep melancholy; a black velvet band across his forehead; slow steps; a vast knowledge of distant countries and events from long ago (Railo 191-7).

Examples: from Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*. The Wandering Jew known as "the stranger" says: "No one is adequate to comprehending the misery of my lot! Fate obliges me to be constantly in movement. I am not permitted to pass more than a fortnight in the same place. I have no friend in the world, and from the restlessness of my destiny I never can acquire one. Fain would I lay down my miserable life, for I envy those who enjoy the quiet of the grave but death eludes me, and flies from my embrace" (169). Also see the example from Percy Shelley's *St. Irvyne*. According to Wade Nichols Krueger, the following description of the character Wolfstein suggests a connection to the Wandering Jew: "Driven from his native country by an event which imposed upon him an insuperable barrier to ever again returning thither, possessing no friends, not having one single resource from which he might obtain support, where could the wretch, the exile, seek for an asylum but with those whose fortunes, expectations, and characters were desperate, and marked as desperately, by fate, as his own?" (36). ~Angela Colson

Werewolf In European folklore, a werewolf is a normal human by day that turns into a wolf at night. These wolves eat people, animals, or even corpses. The condition can be hereditary, or acquired through a werewolf bite. Also, some werewolves are able to control when they change shape, while others are unavoidably turned by the fullmoon. In countries where wolves are not common animals, people can change into other dangerous animals. There is a psychological condition for people who believe themselves to be werewolves, called lycanthropy.

Example: ~Jessica Dunlap

Witches and Witchcraft Within Gothic Fiction, the witch is normally depicted as an elderly hag-like crone or as a beautiful, seductive woman (and she is frequently both). However, the term witch applies not only to these stereotypes but also to Gypsies, heretics, and women of loose virtue. Witches, in Gothic Literature, are able to perform various acts of witchcraft including "divination; communing with spirits of the dead; maleficia and heresy; sexual magic; healing and white magic" (Ringel 254). This depiction of witches and witchcraft is quite common within Gothic Tales and has seemingly set the standard within the minds of the readers. Example: Hawthorne's short story "Young Goodman Brown" is set against a background of Puritan rigidity. Within the tale, the very female occupants of Brown's village are depicted as a coven of witches devoted to the worship of Satan. While the physical descriptions vary, the working of witchcraft and the presence of evil are common in the Gothic definition. However, it should be noted that within Gothic Literature a person does not actually have to be a witch in order to earn the term. Tales based upon the trials and persecution of innocent people were also very popular within the Gothic Period. A primary example of this can be found within another work by Hawthorne. Within *The Scarlet Letter*, heroine Hester Prynne is believed to be a witch by her townspeople based on her adulterous nature and is persecuted accordingly. Another example is *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller, a work based upon the Salem Witchcraft Trials wherein a group of innocent women were hanged as a result of group hysteria. Critic Amos Herold notes that "the presentation of the witch hunting mania evokes the Gothic atmosphere of irrational fear and mass dread" (196). -Lauren Gibson

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